POETRY QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

WE are glad to see that the recent policy of *Poetry Quarterly* to include more poems from the Dominions and Colonies as well as the U.S.A. and translations from European sources has bourne fruit in the form of increasing correspondence with writers in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the African Colonies and all the islands. We are glad to think that *Poetry Quarterly* can find an audience in Johannesburg and San Francisco, Wellington and Bombay as well as Bournemouth and Charing Cross Road. That is as it should be. The English poetic tradition is not confined to the coteries of W.C.1. or the airless corridors of the B.B.C. The future of English poetry may lie across many continents. In this country the outlook appears to be increasingly grim, but it should be remembered that, except in times of stress and danger, it has never been anything else.

As well as the dozen or so poets from this country appearing in the present issue whose work is well known to our readers, we welcome the New Zealand poet LOUIS JOHNSON, the Australian LORNA BRADE and PHYLLIS HARING from Johannesburg. CLARENCE ALVA POWELL and MAY SARTON are from U.S.A., D. N. PRAKASH from India, MARTIN SCHIEMER has lived in the Belgian Congo and is now in Belgium, CARL ZUCKMAYER is a well known German poet. The country of origin does not appear on the same page as the poem. That they can be gathered together here is perhaps the best proof of the true internationalism and universality of the English language.

THOMAS GOOD

This Surrey Village

This Surrey village like a joint in the landscape
Once on a Sunday hid the truant lovers,
As in vice held what God had joined together
Hurrying from bells which in the valley summon
Summer's haul of pilgrims to consider heaven.

Etched in excess of beauty and unresolved
Like hurricane words of travellers between trains,
So distant in our zones we confined the present,
Discerning the actual only in the sensual,
Through eyeholes of bracken saw only a green world
turning,
When like a doll among the meadowsweet you lay.

This New Year's Day over a strange land fading,
Faced with the world again,
The great family of stars,
England revisits among the broken images,
Gives back the green again
At this uncertain hour, where love
Like a wreathed statue repeats
The inevitable fictions of the heart,
The nerve exposed, the stern toll of the blood,
The victory which once seemed treason;
No nearer the ultimate meeting,
My love lies where my body lies tonight.

CHARLES HIGHAM

The White Hart

You see me when the the Summer days are over,
and the cool wine is drunk in a shuttered house:
through the long windows, stroked by light, I come,
to your face-crowded solitude, with a gift
of perfect joy, and the humility
you would desire, could you but love it freely.

In my branched antlers all the stars are held,
forever struggling to escape and be their own
bright worlds in air, yet longing for the peace
I hold, like the snow's blessing on the bitter night.
It is not easy to embrace me, for I tell
no perfect tale of you, only your pain's dead hell.

I know that there is nothing evil in the world,
save fear that drives the human heart from me,
eating its own dark cancer out, and torn
with hopeless passion in its secret war.
I have died many times, and know death's meaning:
It is the well of dread, that leads to hating.

Beauty lives only in the ones who give
and cannot tell they give; who dwell in hope
and yet can meet their sorrows without dread.
I do not come for them, they live in me;
you are the strangers, running from my gaze,
you are the unforgiving I must forgive, or lose.

JAMES KIRKUP

Presence and Absence

You are not far, yet for a day, a night,
a night, another day, a day, another night
you are as far away as if my life had never known
your dreaming face, your sweet, miraculous breathing in
the drown
of sleep, your words at meeting and your parting smile.

One unit to infinity adds nothing more,
and if you were this winter star that fills my window
you would be no nearer, and no further
than our brief separation, that like a calm cloud
moves on the lingering sky, and makes an absence.

Yet this short division is not so
when everything connects, and all is one.
However far, however near, O my departed sun,
closer than handclasp or holding arms
the same light falls upon our separate dark,
bringing us both together, encountered in a kiss of air.
inhabitants of one another, and our time's bright star.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

Catherine Sutherland

My mother, who died 4th August, 1950

Eyes of the living green, my fantasy headed darling,
Grey rumour incredible in her sunflower hair—
How could she ever be old, who walked the wire
With nonchalant poise across the pit of snarling,
Stalked by a shade she made to seem a clown?
Yet into the wounded earth she has gone down,
At the stroke of a single bell estranged from summer.
Put up the knives of love; there is no farewell.

She saw her ownerless world, so green and small,
The woods cut down, the gardens gone under the hammer.
And lonelier than Alcestis she went out,
As if by a subterfuge, to meet the night.

Night grows; night changes all. The revolving spaces
People themselves with legend, chill with names,
Such disparate images as drift in dreams.
The one face sought hides in a crowd of faces
(Oh lost and lost); the crowd assumes one face,
But strange and still and emptied of the eyes.
There is no truth of her left but the fact of my fingers
Shaped like an arrowhead to search the wind.
Where the flints of the ancestors dagger the ground
I walked at noon among the ancient hungers;
There without pause small birds on swinging stalks
Picked the seed-harvest with their blunt, short beaks.

After the bell struck stillness into ripples
Light echoed light until the eyes must close.
The world danced to the burning of her days:
The sun shot carelessly at the red apples.
She who seemed summer's miser, crowned with sun,
Looked once and turned aside, and she has gone
With the cold light in her mind, clear as the morning.
Who locked my childhood in a crystal ball
Has rolled it under the houses where they fell;
Has no more need of this, nor fear of mourning.
The scream of the shaken cities dies away;
The shrivelled years have no more to deny;
Love's claws relax; the exile of heart is over.
Rain, grey and gentle rain, ripen this death:
Cover with living green the personal grief,
This raw and barren mound where plucked words wither.
Cry no more, moorland winds, no more, no more
How foreign is death that has adopted her;
Let alien earth receive her, kin with strangers,
The far past settle around her grain by grain.
Ground shells and pebbles rolled where lost seas ran
Embed her history, shaped by the vanished dangers.

The heart of the rock hangs green upon the tree
As she was joyous with quiet joy.

H. T. NORRIS

Wadi Ramm

"The crags were capped in nests of domes, less hotly red than the body of the hill; rather grey and shallow. They gave the finishing semblance of Byzantine architecture to this irresistable place: this processional way greater than imagination.

T. E. LAWRENCE

Striped, like tents, smooth rocks are shadowed,
Scarlet sand, the mountains sweat;
Near red twigs the muffled bedu,
Days long heat and toil, forgets.
By the gorges, evening whispers
Blend as brush-wood softly dies.
Winds in sorrow softly stroke the bushes,
Echo camp dogs distant cries.

Lost in night, by day commanding
Sculptured cliffs are mute and blind;
Wind-cut boulders, trickling fountains,
Tortured palms, no hand designed.
Out of conflict, world eruption,
Rise that valley's jaw and teeth;
Deep its roots and in its forming
Punctured rocks and sands beneath.
Here no Sun God stands unfashioned
Now no Queen Allat enthrones,
Yet remain their roofless temples,
Silent springs and written stones.
One-stringed fiddles chant their praises,
Sun-baked faces drink their soul,
Pitch their tents in sheltered harbour
While the sand-choked breakers roll.

MA'AN. JORDAN.
1950.

PHILLIPS RUOPP

Épithalame

(For V.S and N. H., Paris, 17 November 1950)

Leaving the raw battlements
Of their ancestral city—
Sung by one, by the other spurned
In a child's taut memories —
These two, above a river
Known to cherish lovers,
Through this brief dusk speak
Their words of troth
To a world now weak
In the portent of endless cold.

But O they close join
In love, and something
Of the world with them, and I.
The logic lidding his eyes
Is bedded for the night,
Contradicted by supplications
To crack the tender vessel
Of his love, to flood
Her vision with planets
Eternally beyond the reach of blood.

W. H. BOORE

I Am Remote From Self

I am remote from self as star-dust from its light
On waters dancing; and still as that shadow men call night
In which the world revolving, eternally is dipped;
This is rapture, when my hands are tipped
With flecks of life like the shadow of petals falling:
And far in eternity my other self is calling
To unite my dreaming with my sleep;
My death with my remaining; my loss with what I keep.
And yet the heart which centres love, how small
Its whispers; its infinity, its endlessness, its all
So empty that the magic of its crying
Is sad with echoes each so slowly dying.
Peace, the conception holding all in one,
Be this to me; and when the aching world is spun,
Let the small within the boundless stay;
Let the eternal hold the little day.

EDGAR FOXALL

The Cypresses

The rustling night advancing as we pass
beyond the tireless stream's relentless cry,
where scents of lime are smeared upon the grass
and campions dim the dimness of a pool.
Strange furtive movements in the dead leaves make
the eye to ponder what it cannot see,
till thought, which strives to penetrate a world,
fails as the wind fails in the apple tree.

We who from hunger after certainty
have raised a scaffolding of sheer desire,
are lost amid the odours of the moon,
and death in that wan face of silent fire,
holds in calm sufferance its one love, the sea.
O that such stillness might forever calm
our late and wandering steps, among these shapes
that ghostlike flourish in the midnight hour.

EDWIN BROCK

And Ever Shall Be

I

Enemy you cannot survive the rain
The rain is denied us everywhere
You cannot survive the rain
Which fills my head leaving my brain
Quite limp, quite lifeless, dry.

Enemy, you have clothed yourself
In many robes and your mask is soft and assured
You have clothed yourself
In crowns which beguile the ignorant
And superstitious to your purpose

Enemy, I have lain long days
In the red sun waiting for your blow
I have lain long days in the red sun
Only to see you go unheeding
Between the shadow and the rock

II

Where the red horse stoops beside
The dark and slowly moving stream
I am disposed to stand there, quite
Still, knowing that every word I utter
Is a prayer and every step a carefully planned ritual

And it is movement I fear
Knowing that journeys develop
Meaning along their route and the
Twisting paths are straight and at the end
A goal waits like another moon

Only let the red horse stand
Motionless with his dull neck curved
And the dark river never know
The sparkle of sunlight . Only
Let the white mare, picking her way
Between the spiteful stones, lean
At his side and the dark river
Never know reflection

III

Between the shadow and the rock is the wilderness
And temptation is eternal. Between
The shadow and the rock is the word.
Avoid the white-robed figures that
Walk towards you in the dusk crying
"Hope, faith, charity" for their eyes are dry
And cannot close. In the wilderness
It is better to walk with closed eyes
And close each ear with hot palm

In the wilderness the word is broken
And lays like fragments of a mirror
In every grain of dust. The wind
Is unwelcome blowing familiar faces
Between rocks. Avoid the wind
Which no longer clears the air
But spreads flesh across cities
Like a dull curtain of ungenerated despair

In the wilderness nothing is certain
But an uncertain knowledge bred
In the blood like a knowledge of coition;
Nothing is certain but the certainty that
Somewhere a tired flame is coughing
Its message, like a consumptive cat,
Between the dreary walls of a deserted
And uninhabitable street

IV

I have mistaken an end for an end
And a beginning for a beginning
In the terrible heat of noon is the flesh
Made rock
Whose is the shadow that will not fuse
And the hand that cannot close?
The wind has curled flesh about our stones
And the desert hung dust upon our folds
Whose is the hand.
The horror. And
The carefully controlled anger?

HILMA BARNARD

The Road

(Imphal to Kohima. 1942-44.)

Upward,
Leaving the green valleys on either side.
The road
Stretches upward, and winds,
Spins or toils, according to our transport,
To meet the transient blue between the summits far above us.

It is a hard road for the drivers.
A tangled skein of a road
Grinding and coiling,
Where no birds come.
And yet, for those who walked, their sorrow and distress
Absorbed, interwoven through the endless track of the road,
This vast, uncharted country
Steep hillside and deep valley
Assists, assuages their numbed inarticulate acceptance.

And Oh! the sunny loveliness of March!
From the ridge of the road the eye travels down
Across the lower hillsides
To the rounded tops of the foot-hills
Hazy with pearl-green flush of new-sprung grass.
And distant trees bursting their rosy buds.
At the end of the valley stands one hill alone,
A black Opal of brilliant purple, green and blue,
The flowering moss softening and clothing its rugged sides,
A living jewel
Startling the heart with the sudden flash of its presence.

But one must be hardy to travel this road,
Hardy in body and spirit.
The bitter winds from the turrets
Freeze
Face and hands, as onward and upward
The convoys pass to their destination:
Upward
Until the road becomes a breathless edge, a ledge
Poised, suspended.
And now tended, mended
By hands without tools,
Handfuls of stones and spring-water carried in hats;
And the little brown men born of these Naga hills.
In ant-like hordes,
Patting the road into shape,
Shaping the road to a pattern of friendship—
Taken for granted.

On the Field of the Cross*
Alone in the chill, pin-pointed air we stand
Silent,
Dwarfed by that vast, ghostly, ageless grandeur.
The tree-tops in the valley beneath us, tenuous wraiths
In the rising mist float around our feet
Like an insidious tide on a flat shore.
Hushed in the cold half-light of early dusk.
Far overhead the gaunt peaks, remote,
Solitary and austere,
Regard indifferently man's pygmy strivings, hopes
And hates.

Here is the message:
"THIS WAY TO TOKIO AND THE EAST."
No time now to watch the lovely Heralds of March.
The jungle paths cover jeeps and hell that creeps.
And India must be saved.

*There was a large Red Cross marked out in stones on a field the size of a football field, beside No. 49 Indian General Hospital, visible from the air and from the road.
The message was at Kohima, but it was met by the troops who were travelling *to* Imphal from the railhead at Dimapur, along the L. of C. to Burma.

D. G. BRIDSON

Leonidas Remembers the Sea

LEONIDAS: Yet,
Fugitive sweet wind blows in from the Islands . . .
Though
Dusty and sultry out of the desert, the South still
Shrivels the delicate petalwork where Spring lies . . .
Back here in the wilderness the old fretfulness . . .
Watching the far swerving of outbound wildfowl,
Feeling the cool draw like a feather across your
eyes . . .
Licking the dry patch of a lip . . . And smiling
To know the wind shift once more out of Libya . . .
Yes, and that other vastness,—the muscular sea . . .
Feeling the tingling of the inblown spume
Cool on your forehead in a new eagerness . . .
Visioning other cities . . . Over the waves there . . .
Free . . .
White cities . . .

CLEON: I remember that sturdy portico . . . Smooth
Fluting couching your shoulder blades . . . The
shadow
Marking a sharp line there in the dust . . . Flowers
Rooted there in the shadow, yet blinking dazedly
Back at you from bright sunlight . . . Shaded stone
Still keeping the burning impress of the noon
hours . . .
Day drifting past on the turning shadow, and evening
Finding you still there . . . Yes, and the shepherd
shouting
Insolently, who drove his ewes to the broken wall . . .
You gazing back again down there to the far sail
Taut as a full wineskin . . .

LEONIDAS: And already
Eager, within the month, to be back re-living it all.
And the loss, no doubt, sharing it . . . For the
heavier cargoes
Loaded badly in those holds . . . As when that
sudden

Shift of the wind—yes, out of Libya—heeled us
Hard over, with four men flung in the sea . . . We tasted
More than the lees of that voyage . . .

CLEON: Yet the spell held you
Still . . . And the flowers closed . . . And the lading bills were sealed . . .

LEONIDAS: Well, who could regret them either,—those wandering years
That bought the sea, however hardly, for all she boded . . ?
Long nights lain with her under the stars . . .
Wakeful . . .
Wrestling upon that narrow bed that never tamed her . . .
Loving and hating by turns . . . Never quite utterly
Coming to one with her . . . . Knowing her still unfaithful . . .

CLEON: Oh, and the grey mist gowning her great limbs again as
Day drives back into the East,—Arcturus
Paling like a spent rushlight there over the prow . . .
Then—suddenly—other immortal out of her arms,—a bright gold
Glitter of sun uprearing there on the far rim,
Urging its dazzling furrow across to you like a plough . . .
Turning her to a new youthfulness . . . And the green
Sheen creeping over her once again like sprouting
Corn that thrusts its colour out of the dull ground . . .
The new gracefulness of her, and all the promises
Made so often . . . So often renewed . . . As in a Goddess,
The wonder you feel in her again, godfearing and profound . . .

LEONIDAS: Yes, that is the sea for you . . . West wind flecking
Wavecrests over the proud mare in a white lather,
Vein-like filigree in a green marble . . . Then scream
Of wind up there in the halliards and the great kick of it

Held by the helmsman . . . That long, straining
Pull on the wet galley-oar . . . And the clean cream
Of spray breaking in over the bulwarks with a heavy thud
Like a javelin stuck in the boards there . . . And the brine
Biting upon the broken blistering of your hand . . .
Searing smart of it like sweat in your clenched eyes . . .
Cold feel of it at the roots of your hair, before
Sun dry and powder it there too, like a white sand . . .

CLEON: Oh, but mostly upon the deck of that other . . . watching—
Grim gather above the masthead—the grey clouds
Away to southward . . . When course was altered
So desperately in—all knew—the vain effort
Still to make landfall over by Sunion with
Its promise of safe anchorage until—haltered
And properly bitted once again—our boisterous mare
Fell back to the gentle whinnying that had fooled us . . !

LEONIDAS: Well . . ? And what but the mast cracked and snapped off like a reed . . ?
Trailing its great welter of wet sail, till the lucky
Slash of a sword severed the last sheet that lashed it
Murderously over the splintering oars, and the ship freed . . .
Well,—that is the sea . . ! Nothing of that in your books,
Friend . . . Or much for you or your books to imagine it by . . !

SOLON: He also knew her for what she was . . . The sly one . . .
Odysseus . . . He spoke for it also . . . And eloquently . . .
You remember?
When we had made our way once more to shore-wards,
Hauling down there to the divine sea, and the mast
Hoisted above the dark ship and sail outshaken,—
Stowing our sheep away, we more than sorrowfully

Went aboard in our turn there, shedding bitter tears . . .
Yet fair wind's good fellowship, for our comforting
Sent by the sleek-haired goddess, the grim Circe,
Following in the dark ship's wake made full our sail . . .
Wherefore, making the tackling fast again, we lay back
Watching weather and helmsman hold us upon that course
All the day long . . .

LEONIDAS: Wherefore over the murkiness
Of those waters the sly one made better sailing
Than I or the others . . . Well, that is the inference . . .
He to Ithaca, I here discontentedly
Patterning figures in the dry sand . . . Finding—
No new Pythagoras—little of permanence . . .

CLEON: And yet, you matched him . . . Sailed over the same seas,
Dropped anchor off the same shores . . . Once wandered
Over that old battleground of his, the windy plain . . .
As I . . . Finding the river beds half empty . . . A dwindling
Runnel under the boulders and dry driftwood . . . Rattling
Its pebbles like a throw of dice, impatient for rain . . .

LEONIDAS: Yes . . . Then down to the sundering of the Hellespont . . .
Laid back in the tall grass there, watching the trireme
Drift over the blowing asphodel away to sea . . .
Making the open prospect of it beyond Imbros . . .
Leaving the sullen Chersonese for a new coastline.
Whence away south once more . . !

CLEON: I too, mistrustfully
Beating to leeward of Cythera, have rounded that
Headland . . . Rising there out of the gusty channel
Broadset as a bull's back, tawny and gold as
Leopardskin in the sunlight . . . Oh, and that other one . . !
Most bewitching of them all, when bright winter

Lays its wide collar of pearl across her shoulders.
Virginal Samothrace . . ! Only for that last voyage
Down there to dismal Hades, had Odysseus
Found us unready . . !

LEONIDAS: Only for that . .

From THE LAST HELLENE

NISSIM EZEKIEL

On Meeting a Pedant

Words, looks, gestures, everything betrays
The unquiet mind, the emptiness within.
Sunlight swarms around him and the summer
Evenings melt in rich fatness on his tongue
But he is rigid, barricaded from
The force of flower or bird by what he reads.
The word is now become a Chinese Wall
And safely rots the impulse on the plain
Of printed word and spoken word. Even God,
If he should one day move across the sky
Plainly to be seen, would cause no stirring
In his blood. There are no headlines to his news.

Forgive me stranger, grant me but a strip
Of silence for the taking off, a patch
Of grass and not of words to roll upon.
Give me touch of men and give me smell of
Fornication, pregnancy and spices,
But spare me words as cold as print, insidious
Words, dressed in evening clothes for drawing rooms.

I swear I will not argue any more.
Do not be combative, my heart; rest or ride
Superbly with the senses. Send out songs.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL

Taliesin's Praise-in-Death of Owain Vab Urien Rheged

Now the Lord have mercy on
The soul of Owen, Urien's son,
Prince of Rheged, and him reward
Whose body lies in the green sward.

Mettle high, lofty brow,
Low the cell that contains him now:
Lance's ash and roof-tree split,
Where are the bards to find a seat?

He was the paragon, he was the pick:
Incendiary Theodoric
Bore down this prince of the glittering west,
And all are losers, him at rest.

Like father like son, so it had been
With Cynfarch and with Urien:
The English in whole companies
Went to sleep with the light in their eyes.

Those who turned at the first attack
He, like a wolf leading the pack,
In his gay trappings hunted down:
The sheep of Catterick's grey-walled town.

Model hero, horses he gave
To any but a tonsured slave
Who to the harp would set his hand
And sing what all might understand.

What he amassed in hard coin
He likewise turned to his soul's account:
God see to it now in its need,
Owen's soul and Ceneu's seed.

DAFYDD ap GWILYM (1320?–1380?)

The Seagull

Gracing the tide-warmth, this seagull,
The snow-semblanced, moon-matcher,
The sun-shard and sea-guantlet
Floating, the immaculate loveliness.
The feathered one, fishfed, the swift-proud
Is bouyant, breasting the combers.

Sea-lily, fly to this anchor to me,
Perch your webs on my hand.
You run among ripples habited
Brilliant as paper-work, come.
Girl-glorified you shall be, pandered to,
Gaining that castle mass, her fortalice.
Scout them out, seagull, those glowing battlements,
Reconnoitre her, the Eigr complexioned—
Repeat my pleas, my citations, go
Girlward, gull, where I ache to be chosen.
She solus, pluck up courage, accost her,
Stress your finesse to the fastidious one,
Use honeyed diplomacy, hinting
I cannot remain extant without her.

I worship her, every particle worships.
Look, friends, not old Merlin, hot-hearted,
Not Taliesin the bright-browed, beheld
The superior of this one in loveliness.

Cypress-shapely, but derisive beneath
Her tangled crop of copper, gull,
O, when you eye all Christendom's
Loveliest cheek——this girl will bring
Annihilation upon me, should your answer
Sound, gull, no relenting note.

Translated from the Welsh by GLYN JONES

BERNARD BERGONZI

On a Painting by Edouard Vuillard

(The Tate Gallery, London)

Continue to smile, girl in the dark dress;
from a Proustian plush interior
gazing out on a wilderness,
quite innocent of our dull hysteria.

Sweet heiress of a fragile charm,
serene amid the teacups' rattle;
child of a world that meant no harm,
knowing only Society's shadowy battle.

Rest in your room with a quiet smile,
caught, in the perfect mood of art,
at your long repose, while
the ghosts of Europe drift, and fall apart.

D. N. PRAKASH

In Love One's Dreams Are Brightened

In love one's dreams are brightened;
Fantasies, thoughts mix and tumble gaily
In a lightness unknown,
Unknown before and after,
Only only the object, the cause,
The reason, the smile,
She is not unknown
Never unknown or forgotten,
And she in reality like a bright thought
Tumbles on through the moments.
And if life were longer
Through the ages.

LOUIS JOHNSON

Siren's Song

Wait, water-borne Ulysses; though the wild
waves split treasures open to your keel.
here riches wither no more
than you shall find on any alien shore,
and more for your delight
than virgins of shy night.

Am I not beautiful, that offer
poem-secreting breasts to suffer
your mouth magnificent?
tender voluptuous lineament
to fill your arms with wonder,
every sense to sunder-

ing fancies stranger than fact?
Shorewards then, make your pact
with time, and render
love to the object of abject surrender
who else will ponder on this shore
sources forgotten, dreams lost evermore.

Poetry, wind-weighed Ulysses, is the prize
for strong of heart—loot for clear of eyes;
your wings, afraid, bear you over the bay
on seas uncharted where the words will flay
song from your ear, and the night descend to lose
beautiful meanings under the waves of prose.

PHYLLIS HARING

Apollyon

". . . . king of a swarm of locusts which shall torment those who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads." Rev. ix.

I arrive on the edge of the world with wings,
A locust clinging to my forehead,
And I stand on the edge of the world thus;
Darkness within me, water behind my back,
And certain memories.
—I appear sorrowful, like an angel.

And there are people who come before me,
Their gaze fixed upon the locust, their eyes
Held by the jewel eyes of the locust—
And it regards them with jaws moving, with hunger.

. . . There is a pain in my forehead,
And my eyes close; I hear the dry sound
Of wings, of a multitude of wings crackling:
And there are people standing in the darkness,
Who cry out and fling themselves upon me—
And I, Apollyon, feel myself falling
Over the edge of the world over the edge . . .

LORNA BRADE

Poem for Afternoon

I

A dry shaft of light is drawn through the windy streets
To the point of converging ends.
It strikes the window frames in the sharpness
Of late afternoon to which there is no returning
Through the shadow stretched from a lonely palm
Long forgotten by the roadmakers.

II

Sand blows over the broken sidewalks sore
With heaped decay, where the bawdy-house, palely
Excoriated, stands watch behind green shutters.
Here they lie, newspaper and watermelon rind and offal,
All badly concealed by chance and circumstance,
Wishing it were not so;
But the effort is too great to rise so far
To top the fluted minaret and disperse
On the coursing breath of the Empty Quarter
As the spirit listeth.
All wishing is to lurk at the doorpost
Till the heat be done.

III

The voice of the minaret calls, and calls
More insistently but not more urgently
For it knows how the men in the coffee-houses
Have sat hour upon hour with their dice,
Tric and trac on the polished board,
Repeating the thought, word in, word out,
The bead in the skull;
And how behind the lonely curtain
Is the slow gurgling of the hubble-bubble
Waiting and awaiting its end
Where the streets converge.

IV

"Come, O refuse of the sunken pavement,
Blown in folly, cast in pain.
Call upon your God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
For His gifts are plentiful
As the sand that folds to the furtive heart
Caught in the half-closed half-dream of green shutters.
Lift your pitiful strength to the burning
Of the desert wind before it fails
That your flesh smoulder to ash
And your incense fill the cruel coasts
Of my complacency with myrrh and labdanum
Until, to pall this ended fantasy of lights
And shades, the lines shall spin and gather
Into webs of blindness."

CLARENCE ALVA POWELL

Homecoming

Unlike Odysseus, I stand beside
The sea, my ships the dreams that never sailed,
My landlocked harbours filled with cargoes of
Despair—a sort of innuendo-sadness;
That storm had drowned them all, each skeleton
Of wave that rolled into my hollow mind,
Would find oblivion a deeper grave.

Or winged—mercurial—should not have died,
Tempestuous life and love forever stilled,
The flagrant soul impaled in frozen streams
Of heart that choke the passion, even madness;
But rather, should have risen, glorious
Among the other gods, celestial fire
My lyre, Odysseus—and I—the song.

MAY SARTON

Song

It is still you who
Nourish the root of sorrow
Are green in the bough
Of my secret joy;
I lie in the shadow
Lovely and intricate
Of your many leaves
Where the gloom weaves
Wind through the sunlight
Within a tree of light,
Splendour of green and fire
That shelters poetry
In the hour of desire
But in the wintry hour
Covers the fire with snow
Under an icy bough.

Surely will come the hour
Beyond all presence,
Far beyond time or sense,
Green at the heart of fire,
Fire at the heart of snow,
Rose at the heart of pain
When I'll find you again,
Strange subtle power.

CARL ZUCKMAYER

Elegy on Absence and Return

(Written in America, Autumn 1939)

I know I shall return again some day,
And look in vain for all that I have known.
Through void, blind cities I shall make my way,
Where not one stone rests on another stone—
And even where remembered stones yet stay
I shall not find the streets that memory charted—
I know I shall return again some day,
But never to the land whence I departed.

Westward, as then, will the broad river glide;
As then, amongst its' willows, breezes tread—
Those willows that, spared by the falling tide,
Remain like silent watchers by the dead.
A shadow will be stalking at our side,
A breath from midnight blowing round each head—
For he who living saw his grave may ride
Into the dawn, still shuddering with dread.

I know I'll come, reluctantly, again,
And the old, urgent longing will not rise.
Our heart's delight in homecoming is slain,
And what we sought with passion lifeless lies.
In its own flames our grief will have its ending.
Cool ashes float up when the cruel fire dies—
Till Memory over darkened seas ascending
Prints her eternal cypher on the skies.

Translated from the German
by N. K. CRUICKSHANK

MARTIN SCHIEMER

The Golden Forest

Against the darkened silhouette
Heavy with a yellow light,
Vines are woven as a net—
Mystery of an African night.

And from down the forest now
Moves an owl with glossy wing.
Floats across the hardened brow,
Into the deep and golden ring.

Through the hollow trees arise
The lemur's electrifying shrill,
That cuts into the tropical skies,
And turns the leaves that tremble still.

Twisting, creaking, the soft wind blows
Branches of silver in the moon,
The shadows hide what no man knows
Secrets of destruction soon.

Moulded by the Immortal Hand
That turns up moments of the past,
And shifted back this eery land,
Disappearing far at last.

The heavy gold that forms the flight
To quieter places, Who will bless
A darker and a silent night,
And leave me to my loneliness?

THE *genius* of the Ulster settlers and their descendants has been displayed in science and technology rather than in imaginative work; thriving industries have been built up from the former swamplands of the Lagan without the initial advantage of local raw materials other than flax. It is symptomatic that at the Queen's University in Belfast the chief Faculty is that of Medicine, the least important that of Arts. Yet Ulster has produced a number of outstanding creative workers in literature—Sir Samuel Ferguson, William Allingham, AE (George William Russell), Joseph Campbell, Robert Lynd and Forrest Reid.

Ulster's literary background differs markedly from that of Southern Ireland, having little or no trace of Gaelicism, though ironically enough in the ancient Gaelic sagas Ulster (Uladh) and her heroes, such as Cuchulain, play an important part. But the Anglo-Scots planter influence has been too strong not to have left an indelible impression on the Province and her poets. We turn naturally to the main English literary tradition.

Since the generation of Joseph Campbell and AE, until the late Thirties, there was an almost complete blank in poetic utterance and in drama. No middle generation of quality had arisen to whom the younger writers could look for guidance, not to speak of inspiration. This indeed was perhaps to a certain extent advantageous, as elsewhere the slightly older generation acts frequently as a brake on new talent.

Commercialism, with its rough edges unsmoothed by the graces that money can buy, lack of true values and isolationism, due to an absorption in domestic quarrels that originated several centuries ago, make life extremely difficult for the sensitive young Ulsterman. His early impulse is to break free, cut himself off completely from such a smothering atmosphere. Later, he learns to modify his attitude and even to find certain good and positive traits in his environment.

Several young poets (among them Roy MacFadden and myself), though they cannot be said to add up to a "movement" in any accepted sense, did find themselves during the Forties in arms against the stupidities of their native place; pacifist in outlook, we did not join the Army. John Hewitt, that excellent nature poet, who had been writing steadily for several years, now attain-

ed a wider acceptance partly through the new awakening that had come about.

I can remember how in the first year of War I read, with growing excitement and admiration, the work of a hitherto unknown Belfastman, W. R. Rodgers. Ten or more years older than the rest of us, we were somewhat surpised that Rodgers (or rather the Rev. Mr. Rodgers of Loughgall, Co. Armagh) had been writing for only two or three years. The fact is explained in a very interesting note contained in the "blurb" of his volume *Awake! and Other Poems* (1941):

> That this volume contains all the poems I have so far written is not an accident; that none was written earlier than three years ago is not without meaning; for I was schooled in in a backwater of literature out of sight of the running stream of contemporary verse. Some murmurs of course I heard, but I was singularly ignorant of its extent and character. It was in the late 'thirties that I came to contemporary poetry, and I no longer stood dumb in the tied shops of speech or felt stifled in the stale air of convention.
>
> I have not at any time written except when I have had something to say. Where there is the *will* to say something there is always a *way;* imagination and technique act as one... For what is 'style' but matter in motion!

Rodgers forms an excellent contrast to Hewitt; unlike the latter, he has been a comparatively slow starter; but now that he is in the race one can confidently back him to stay the course. Nor has he been as prolific as Hewitt: his poems seem to require a relatively long incubation period, so much so indeed that since the appearance of his volume, nearly ten years ago, he has published only twenty poems, though he may have set aside several with which he felt dissatisfied, to be published if and when revised. Further, Rodgers is essentially a *modern* poet; Hewitt is not. And as a last contrast, there is Rodger's greater interest in technique; Hewitt's calm acceptance ("no rebel word" to use his phrase) of tradition naturally has found for itself a quiet homespun, sturdy idiom. while Rodgers goes off devil-may-caring in metres as in ideas.

Like several other critics, at one time I assumed that Hopkins had been Rodgers' chief influence, but I have since learnt that he did not read Hopkins until fairly recently. (An ironic comment surely on the findings of critics!) Yet I cannot help feeling that

the Jesuit had influenced him through the medium of other and lesser poets. In some of the *Awake!* poems one could sense the near-presence of Auden, though wit and cleverness as such are not Rodgers' *forte*, and the field of psychoanalysis, though it interests him, provides little real material for a mind that draws directly from life. Dotted here and through his work are reminders, if not echoes, that on him, too, Yeats and even Swinburne have made an impression, as in:

But—why so still? What! are you weeping, my sweet?
Ah heart, heart, look! I throw myself at your feet

In *Awake!* Rodgers had not a great deal to say with regard to the War. Indirectly, though, his attitude came through unmistakably. Like every poet he chastised the greed and suspicion that poison us all and lead to the violence that settles nothing, and merely brings about further violence. Of bombing he wrote in *The Far-off Hills:*

It is a pity that distance props
The deed of darkness bright side up,
That no round returning view
Rocks the airman's aim askew,
Implicates his blood and bone,
Makes another's wound his own ....

And he was the poet who could advise uncomfortable behaviour:

O do not
Acquiesce in their toadying truths, refuse
To sing their subsidised praises...

The chief long poem of the early Rodgers was *Summer Holidays* in which he followed the day-to-day progress of a clerk-in-the-street from the first moment of longing for release to the final consummation of holiday ecstasy. It is, of course, a satirical piece; unkindly, perhaps, but bitingly true, an analysis of the average and trivial. Arrived at the seaside, let us see what happens to our city clerks:

Along the valley roads some roll in cars,
Looking for life on sky-lines or in bars,
Mustered in bus on mystery trip they cheer
As the chartered miles gape before them
And zip obediently behind them,
Their fixed stare clattering like a stick

Across the sliding face and fence of fields
To the full stop where they interrogate
The great man's birthplace, or the rebel's grave.

In the same poem, incidentally, there is a recurrent Rodgers theme—the pull of opposites. ("Each thing resists and buoys its opposite.") Thus there is no love without hatred and no life without death. H. A. L. Craig, writing in the Dublin *Bell*, remarks: "The chase, to Rodgers, is not just the jigging of the hare or the squeal of its capture; the hunted and the hunter are indivisible: each needs the other."

In the past nine years or so Rodgers has written few poems, on the average two a year. He has, it is true, joined the B.B.C. as a script writer, and has produced a number of excellent 'feature' programmes, in which music and lyrical statement are happily married. Since he was never a prolific poet (writing only, remember, when he had something to say) it would be unfair to accuse the B.B.C. of unduly drawing upon what may be called his poetic bank. The handful of poems he *has* written have been mainly of two kinds—'religious' and narrative.

The 'religious' poems—the inverted commas question only their orthodoxy and not their validity—would comend themselves neither, I imagine, to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (in which faith Rodgers and I were brought up) nor to its principal rival for souls, the Roman communion. In "Lent" he has created a memorable poem on Mary Magdalene, seeing freshly and vividly across the centuries:

"... Over the balconies of these curved breasts
I'll no more peep to see
The light procession of my loves
Surf-riding in to me
Who now have eyes and alcove, Lord, for Thee."

"Room, Mary" said He, "ah make room for me
Who am come so cold now
To my tomb." So, on Good Friday
Under a frosty moon
They carried Him and laid Him in her womb.

A poem of greater verbal force and alliterative splendour, though perhaps less moving than *Lent*, is *Christ Walking on the Water*. Rodgers does not attempt to rewrite the Biblical narrative—who indeed could dare to attempt it?—but simply aims at re-creating it in contemporary terms for a twentieth-century

that still rejects Christ in favour of temporary shifts and expedients. Like David Gascoyne, he brings his myrrh and frankincense to the "Christ of Revolution and Poetry" and not to the sentimentalised and sickly Christ figure of the conventionally religious.

The poems based on Greek mythology—*Pan and Syrinx, Apollo and Daphne, Europa and the Bull*—make use of the *motif* of escape; escape when there is no escape, with pursuer and pursued equally victims. Just within Pan's grasp, Syrinx suddenly disappears; baffled, he finds that the nymph has become a green reed ("So this was how/She gave the slip to his lubricity"). Well might the disappointed Pan demand:

> *Would nothing ease*
> *The nettle-tease of flesh, the salted taws*
> *Of lust?*

One can underline the moral for oneself.

A new "Third Programme" literature has come into being—MacNeice, Heppenstall, Tiller and Rodgers travel widely for the B.B.C., listening and recording in drawing-room and market-place. Rodgers has done good work in recording personal impressions by contemporaries of Yeats and James Joyce; but he has done even better work in his own script programmes, in the "Europe" series, for example: *Easter in Europe, Summer in Europe, Europe in Festival*. Reflective in Scandinavia, he writes:

> *And sitting at supper, we look out over the looking-glass lake*
> *Bright as a cat's eye. In the midnight light*
> *A single sail is ghosting home on the water . . .*

And he salutes the dazzle of teeming Italy:

> *The wasp is on the apple, the swallow on the wire,*
> *Late September now, and Italy's all afire . . .*
> *Reared in northern gloom for us it's a timeless sight,*
> *All this land oleandered and eldoradoed with light—*
> *Exuberant Italy!*

Yes, and exuberant Rodgers! But I have space here only to hint at the gun-fire impressionism of these radio programmes, their intimacy and colour and quiet dignity; remembering, too, that they have been written for the fireside ear and not for the leisured page. By his radio work Rodgers has added another dimension to his personality as writer.

What, then, does it all add up to? And where is Rodgers likely to go from here? To the first question, one must say that he is a poet whose vigour of idiom and originality of theme place him among the best of our contemporaries. His accent unmistakeable. he has left promise behind and has achieved. As to how he is likely to develop, it is difficult (as in all prophesy) to be dogmatic; the lines are not clearly defined, though it is likely that he will continue to experiment in radio. Will he tend to repeat himself, or, making a new flight, partly deliberate and partly intuitive, from his present position, find new landscapes of the imagination? Whatever happens—and he still has time on his side—I should be extremely surprised if he became less daring in thought and image, a low-level flier content with short routine flights.

ROBERT GREACEN

CARVER OF EPITAPHS

Inward Companion, by WALTER DE LA MARE, (Faber, 8s. 6d.).

"Slim cunning hands at rest, and cozening eyes—
Under this stone one loved too wildly lies;"

THESE lines from his new book may serve to show that Walter de la Mare is still the greatest carver of epitaphs alive today. But it is important to realise that he is far more than the contemplative sexton or the traveller knocking on the moonlight door, and that almost the entire Commonwealth of Poets would acclaim him as their unacknowledged Laureate. Like Spenser, however, he sometimes suffers from being the "poets' poet" and readers may have been deceived into thinking his simplicity more suitable for their children. Yet this is by no means the case, and particularly in this collection of poems ranging in one or two instances as far back as fifty years ago, one can find a whole philosophy of life bounded like infinity in a four-line nutshell. "You are your Universe", the poet says, "look into your heart and write" or at least live by that inner light of conscience which casts no distorted shadow.

Not all the poems reflect this spiritual question and anwer. Many show the brilliant colours of, say, an Elizabethan miniature ("Lovely things these eyes have seen—Dangling cherries in

leaves dark-green"), or a quiet appreciation of Nature ("The drowsy earth, craving the quiet of night, Turns her green shoulder from the last sun's ray"); and for those who demand the unusual what could be more accurate or unexpected than a description of a sleeping child which observes

"The zig-zag turquoise of that artery straying"?

In a world in which poetry is regarded as a neurosis to be expelled by a psychologist or as the early braying of the young ass before he turns to fiction or the Stage, it is good to find that once again Mr. de la Mare has shown that Poetry can combine Beauty with Good Sense.

JOHN BAYLISS

THE IMPASSE OF MODERN RELIGIOUS POETRY

A Vagrant and other Poems by DAVID GASCOYNE, (Lehmann 7s.6d.)
Selected Poems of Thomas Merton, (Hollis & Carter 12s. 6d.).
The Region of the Summer Stars by CHARLES WILLIAMS (Geoffrey Cumberledge—Oxford University Press 6s.).
The Crown and the Fabel by HUGO MANNING (Gaberbocchus Press 6s.).
The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc by CHARLES PEGUY, (Hollis & Carter 12s. 6d.).

WHEN Herrick wrote his *Noble Numbers* the problem of religious poetry was a good deal simpler than it is today. Properly speaking, there is no such problem: there was only the problem of poetry in general. A largely unquestioned theology provided the intellectual blue-print for the poem, whilst the sensibility moved easily amongst the sentiments of a religion whose observance was a natural part of daily living.

With the progressive deliquescence of dogma and the evaporation of religious feeling, which our century has witnessed, the writing of religious verse has become a much more difficult business. To consider the matter in terms of language only, it would seem that modern religious poetry tends to manifest an inappropriateness of diction, a certain unhomliness of right ex-

pressive speech. This is certainly the case with four out of five of the poets whose books are listed above.

I once decribed David Gascoyne's verse as the painful poetry of pre-conversion. That climacteric of doubt is now passed; the poet has accepted a vision of faith, and presumably the peace accompanying it. Yet this acceptance has been intellectual rather than one of the whole personality—or so it would seem to judge from the verse which fails to speak of peace and light in the same immediate and sensuous terms as those in which it earlier spoke of despair. This comes out in several ways: in his using verse as the medium for composing certain maxims of the inner life (unlike Coventry Patmore, for example, who was careful to segregate the findings of his intellectual and poetic intuitions, reserving the medium of verse for the latter whilst for the former he he chose the aphorism);* in the slack-footed rhythms of some of his lines ("And the attic window boxes above the market/Offer tribute of happy beauty to the omniscient Heavenly Eye"); and in the fact that the best poems in "A Vagrant" are those that convey not revelation, but moods of anxiety and apprehension ("A Vagrant", "The Post-war Night", "Evening Again").

If one can speak of Gascoyne's verse as resulting from a directed sensibility, that of Thomas Merton, the American Trappist, seems to fail through the incongruity of its content and expression. "At Noon", he writes, "the sky goes off like a gun", and in this line—with its suggestion of Lorca, Cocteau, and Appollinaire—the impressionism of his method is fairly illustrated. But impressionism above all other styles, is principally the art of men "for whom the visible world exists"—hardly the happiest choice for a poet who is chiefly concerned with invisible orders. Although Thomas Merton is now a Cistercian, his muse is still of the earth earthly. It is only just to add, however, that certain of his pieces ("Advent", "After the Night Office", "The Trappist Cemetery", etc.) employ a more solid and perennial imagery.

Charles Williams, to me, is a sapless neuter poet—the geometrician of a crabbed hermetic myth. Both Eliot and George Every have bestowed their respective commendations on his verse, but I have been unable to follow or share their reasons. An essay on his work by the latter critic seems itself apologetic in certain statements. "If his thought" writes Bro. Every, "never found its

*In his book, "The Rod, The Root and The Flower"

perfect form in art, it was essentially poetic thinking, an act of myth making".* But mythopoesis and poesis are not identical activities of mind. To me, it seems that "the Region of the Summer Stars" offers no more than the schematization, the obscure abstract of a religious myth whose compulsion the poet does not make us feel.

> *As the slave's horse moved beneath her, she saw the lords*
> *riding before her, the Ways upon the Way,*
> *cloaked in the dim day, on the highroad of the hazel*
> *between city and convent, the two great vocations,*
> *the Rejection of all images before the unimaged,*
> *the Affirmation of all images before the all-imaged,*
> *the Rejection affirming, the Affirmation rejecting.*

Less reduced to a cut-and-dried scheme, but every whit as private in utterance is the poetry of Hugo Manning. Cajamarca, Quichua Cordillera, Taleria: the strange names suddenly occur in his verse with but the slightest indication of their purport. The mood and style of the poet's work sometimes recall the Old Testament prophets—a Job in the soul's dark night of modern chaos, whose dialectics are difficult to follow.

Of all five poets here reviewed, Charles Péguy alone seems to have adapted language satisfactorily to his purpose. By which, I do not mean that he has solved the problem of speech with any absolute poetic success. But whereas the language of the other four poets tends to increase our unbelief in a subject that readily prompts it today, that of Péguy, by its common touch, its colloquial naturalness, mitigates our doubt. "No Frenchman", observes Julian Green, who introduces and translates this work, "ever wrote like Péguy, although the man in the street of Paris or Orléans is apt to speak exactly as Péguy wrote . . . His books are spoken rather than written and lack something of their meaning if they are not read aloud." This omnipresent vernacular has both drawbacks and advantages. In so far as it imparts the lively authenticity of the spoken word, it is clearly an asset to the poet: but where it leads to garrulity, to redundancy and repetition, the result is platitudinous and boring. Here is one of Jeanette's speeches (more like monologue) to Madame Gervais:

*"Poetry and Personal Responsibility" (S.C.M. Press 1949)

"Accomplice, accomplice, it's like author. We are accomplices in this, we are the authors of this. Accomplice, accomplice, it is just as if you said author.

He who allows things to be done is like him who orders them to be done. It is all one. It goes together. And he who allows things to be done, just like him who orders things to be done, it is altogether like him who does them."

This passage hardly serves to illustrate the scope and strength of Péguy's present work. Based on a principle of chimes or ringing stresses, which are identical and emotional rather than melodic, it requires ample space for the slow consummation of its various motifs to be fully realised. Because of the circumlocution required for the working out of its pattern, this curious 'prose-poem' drama is quite unsuited to the stage. But for all its native plethora of speech, Péguy's work represents, for me, a more convincing use of language in religious poetry than that of the others. Yet here there is no absolute speaking *ex cathedra*. As Coventry Patmore once observed, "The Holy Spirit so speaks with the divine tongue in each prophet that each man hears Him speak in his own tongue".

DEREK STANFORD

ANTHOLOGIES BY THE FIRESIDE

The Golden Shakespeare, compiled by LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH. (Constable, 15s.). *A Book of the Winter*, compiled by EDITH SITWELL, (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.).

In this hard winter it has been a pleasure, one of the few, indeed, to sit by a large wood fire in any old country house and read Shakespeare or the gleanings of Edith Sitwell. In this time of the world's rot it is necessary to turn to works of the very great in order to retain one's sanity. Logan Pearsall Smith, who died recently, passed a very long life polishing, revising and refining anthologies. Begun in the early 1930's after his essay *On Reading Shakespeare* he was still putting the final touches to it up to the time of his death. He might claim that here was the only gold of Shakespeare. There is the best here from single phrases to whole scenes, arranged in the chronologi-

cal order established by modern scholarship. in one handy volume no bigger than a novel.

If you like excerpts and don't want to burden yourself with the heavier tome of the one volume edition published recently by Odham's and the Shakespeare Head Press at the remarkably cheap price of 15s., or if you are going by air or only taking a small suitcase The Golden Shakespeare won't take up any room at all. It will sing to you its strange antique song as well in the dark heart of Africa or in a Bloomsbury boarding house and the most sordid atmosphere will fade before the old romantic ghost draped in his well worn cloak of quickening words.

Edith Sitwell's book is a collection of very short pieces ranging from Chaucer to Jose Garcia Vila whose work Miss Sitwell has herself done much to make known in England. It is not larger than many average books of poems and will easily slip into a pocket or the smallest of spaces by bed or chair. Part poetry, part prose in English and French it is much more than suitable reading for a winter's evening but casts a moonflecked net over the vast waters of the spirit in the quiet recesses of our dark season, though there are some good ice and snow pieces such as the one from a travel book on Spitzbergen. But there is also the white light described by the young Rimbaud aged 14, and Mallarmé masterpiece 'Le vierge, le vivace at le bel aujourd'hui' which seems to be more hauntingly perfect and mysterious every time you read it. This is a book of fascinating scourings of the pot of literature. It is well worth keeping by you for use when you are suffering from mental indigestion from the stream of 'important books praised by the weekly journalists.

WREY GARDINER

WHAT YOU SAY, AND HOW YOU SAY IT

Andrew Young—Collected Poems, with wood engravings by JOAN HASSALL (Cape, 10s. 6d.).
The Season's Pause by W. J. STRACHAN (Secker & Warburg 7s. 6d.).
Underworlds by FRANCIS SCARFE (Heinemann 8s. 6d.).
Mountains Beneath the Horizon by WILLIAM BELL: edited and introduced by JOHN HEATH-STUBBS, (Faber 8s. 6d.).
The Voice of Poetry, an Anthology, edited by HERMANN PESCHMANN, (Evans, 8s. 6d.).
The Pleasures of Poverty, an Argument and an Anthology by ANTHONY BERTRAM, (Hollis & Carter 15s.).

ANDREW YOUNG is one of the most interesting independents of our time. As a pastoral miniaturist he resembles Robert Frost; his thrifty diction and the way he looks at domestic things recall John Crowe Ransome; Walter de la Mare comes to mind through his light and occasional archaic diction: Clare too seems represented in his Nature themes—a chastened Clare though; and the French symbolists are present at times. But for all this, Andrew Young does not write quite like anyone else. probably because he is a born artist. An artist, I mean in the way that Chechov is an artist, whose prose is to me the most forcible counterpart of Andrew Young's poetry. And an artist whose uniqueness and 'secret' is partly founded on good taste. There must be volumes of poetry left unwritten in the whole of Mr. Young's experience of Nature. But from this experience he has chosen to record very little, very briefly. And that little is as much and no more than his power of expression will cope with. That is, I think, his first asset—it is an asset if any poet knows that poetry is not only what you say, but how you say it, and to discover just what you are capable of saying.

What Andrew Young has to say, is that he has seen the multifarious worlds of Nature from their side of experience. Unlike Wordsworth, of whom Nature was a projection, Mr. Young seems to know what it is like to be a mole, a hill, a thunderstorm. He does not speak as one identified with them—his poetry is not pantheistic—but as one who has been at nature's disposal from time to time. He speaks of Nature's otherness, in terms of its own reckonings, as a traveller might of the strange customs and

conceptions of an alien people. This is how time appears in the world of an ancient tree, as Mr. Young reports it:

One elbow on the sloping earth it leans,
That steeply falls beneath,
As though resting a century it means
To take a moment's breath

And on a dead mole, the poet reflects:

For you to raise a mound
Was as for us to make a hole,
What wonder now that being dead
Your body lies here stout and square
Buried within the blue vault of the air!

Looking at Mr. Young's method more closely, one finds repeatedly a kind of riddle-imagery which makes its impact a fraction later than the literal meaning.—The missel thrush, looking down into a pool of water, sees the poet 'Crawl at the bottom of the air'.—The poet revisits a scene after many years, and as he stares into the water each reflection, even his own, seems unchanged, until he remarks his hair touched with white. But he does not say it like that. He says it from the point of view of the water, in this riddle-language of his:

Although I notice that my hair
Now stirs a little foam in the smooth bay.

This type of imagery is what enforces the freshness of Mr. Young's vision. We are familiar with the fact that dandelions are orange-coloured, but the statement,

. . . . . *dandelions flood*
The orchard as though apple-trees
Dropped in the grass ripe oranges.

invests the fact with strangeness and beauty. Because such a technique is so personal a part of Mr. Young's vision, he is not to be imitated. I don't know of any poet who has succeeded.

Sometimes, though, Mr. Strachan in *The Season's Pause* does something very near to Andrew Young, where he juggles the strange and the familiar with a rather light hand. But this is not a sound comparison if carried further. Mr. Strachan is an impressionist which Mr. Young never is. In fact I think Mr.

Strachan has indulged impressionism over-much, with the result that his experience seems self-consumed and pointless. But he has another style, to me preferable, which appear in his more objective pieces. There, when he looks outward and grasps a substantial theme, the poet seems much more assured, as in the poem *At Zennor* which invokes the spirits, both once resident there, of Kathleen Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence; or in *The Grief of a Poet*, where the poetic cliché (even worse in poetry, perhaps, than is the prosaic cliché) which mars Mr. Strachan's vaguer verse, is absent. I believe this style is a later development —one in which what the poet says is not lost in how he says it.

Mr. Scarfe's *Underworlds* has little to say—little, that is which has not been better said or said too often. I suspect Mr. Scarfe is really more interested in how he says it than what he says, since there is an inconsistency of attitude throughout. But even the way he says it, when most successful, merely echoes the language of more successful poets. It is that the author has not properly assimilated the poetry that has influenced him, as well might happen to a poet-critic like Mr. Scarfe? I don't know; but the effect is of the double cliché of thought and statement.

But what is the poetic cliché? I think perhaps it is the repetition, without personal conviction, of a *way* of thinking or speaking. The loose, unnoticeable line is symptomatic of it. I do not suggest that a poet necessarily commits a cliché who adapts ideas already propounded to forms already established. A case in point is the selection of poems by the late William Bell, which John Heath-Stubbs has chosen and introduced. William Bell employs many traditional forms; his thought is traditional. But this is tradition apprehended with a powerful personal vision; and the poet has seen the possibilities of traditional forms with an individual eye. His was "a talent which held a singular promise of development", as Mr. Heath-Stubbs writes in his sympathetic introduction to the work of this poet who, in his early twenties, was killed while mountaineering. His technical skill—the balance and formation of his lines and original rhyming show not only promise but real maturity.

I do not suppose many critics will be able to set up the usual wail about who has been left out of Mr. Peschmann's anthology, for he is scrupulously comprehenive in representing the poets of the last twenty years. Representation seems to be its main theme, and for an introduction to recent verse, it will serve a most rewarding purpose. For those well acquainted with the

work of the poets concerned, it might seem to contain too many obvious anthology-pieces, but no anthology can serve everyone's purpose; and the somewhat drab jacket cover and funereal Gothic capitals in which *The Voice of Poetry* is announced, should not be taken as an indication of its contents.

Quite a different type of anthology is Mr. Bertram's *The Pleasures of Poverty*. It is really an essay on poverty, in which quotations form the main substance. Supplemented by a series of well-written 'Arguments', the book is divided into three parts—the first dealing with the state of poverty (carefully distinguished here from destitution) celebrated as an ideal state; the second illustrates the negative virtue of poverty, so far as it is unencumbered with the cares of wealth; and the third expresses the conception of Holy Poverty (which might include destitution) as a way to material disaffection and the spiritual life. A brief account cannot do real justice to Mr. Bertram's admirable labours, nor show how widely he has ranged through Western literature to support his belief that the best things in life are free. I can only say that this book on poverty is a rich and rare one.

MURIEL SPARK

KEATS AND OUR CONTEMPORARIES

PROMPTED by the publication of two books, this article, while taking account of them, proposes to consider also the relevance of Keat's thought to our time and the question of his influence on contemporary verse. The books are *A Life of John Keats* by Dorothy Hewlett (Hurst and Blackett, 25s.), an augmented reprint of her *Adonais*; and *The Mystery of Keats* by John Middleton Murry (Peter Neville, 12s. 6d.), also in part a reprint of his *Studies in Keats: New and Old,* but much revised and with some important new chapters.

Dorothy Hewlett's *Life* if not definitive at least includes all that we so far know of the life of Keats, his friendships, associations and love, and presents for the first time a biography of him that takes cognisance of the new estimate we are bound to have of Fanny Brawne following the publication in 1936, of her letters to Fanny Keats.

She does not start very promisingly when she says that she has "approached the man from the angle of his life rather than his work"—forgetting Keats's own dictum: "A man's life of any

worth is a continual allegory" and, as with Shakespeare, "his works are the comment on it." But, fortunately, her performance is better than her promise, and she confesses to having "out of enthusiasm been betrayed into more commentary on the poems than originally intended" (!); and her book gets progressively better. It is to the same enthusiasm, one supposes, that one must attribute certain 'purple patches' that could well have been spared, such as (p. 53):

> *"with head thrown back, chin out and lip quivering, the boy would seem to rise in stature and his wine-dark eyes flash"*

or (p. 69):

> *"He would stay very late with Hunt in sweet converse";*

though one must admit they are not typical of the book as a whole. But why is it necessary to speak of Italy (p. 73) as "the alien land in which Shelley was then living"— far less "alien" to him than England; or to use (p. 68) "invocate" for "invoke" or (p. 231) "grateful" for "gratifying"? But these are mostly minor errors of taste, not of fact; and she can sometimes sum up a character or a situation very succinctly, even aphoristically, as when she suggests all the self-importance and all the absurdity of Haydon in a few lines:

> Haydon was constantly thanking God, or exhorting God to support him against his enemies and his creditors. He felt himself to be under the divine protection but was constantly reminding Him of His duty."

If not among artists, at any rate among poets, the type is not yet entirely extinct! Incidentally this book startlingly recalls to us an almost contemporary link with Keats: the death of his nephew John, fifth son of George, at the age of ninety . . . in 1917!

This biography, with eighteen illustrations in photogravure, two MS. facsimiles and an excellent bibliography, is a painstaking piece of work and obviously a labour of love; like many such labours of love it is somewhat too long. It has the advantage, however, of letting Keats tell the story largely in his own words —sometimes in extracts from the poems, more often from those incomparable Letters. But in one respect it departs from this— and gives us, more copiously than in any single volume hitherto, extracts from contemporary reviews. That *The Monthly Review*

finds Keat's 1820 volume "often labouriously obscure" and containing "such strange intricacies of thought and peculiarities of expression that we find considerable difficulty in discovering his meaning"; and that *The London Magazine* echoes the charge of "obscurity and confusion of language", must give our Ivor Browne a few nasty moments on how their own puerile charges of deliberate obscurantism in the work of contemporary poets will strike a later age.

Dorothy Hewlett would not claim originality for her book. Her purpose has been to assemble in a single volume the information amassed and the discoveries made by her predecessors and contemporaries. Mr. Murry's aim is much more ambitious. While he never neglects or despises the researches of other students of Keats, he seeks to convey a highly individual view of certain aspects of Keats's life, thought and work, not covered, or touched on inadequately, in *Keats and Shakespeare*. His title, *The Mystery of Keats*, is itself a sign of the almost mystical aura with which Mr. Murry invests Keats, and which has alienated or rendered impatient certain scholars like De Selincourt or Dr. Tillyard. It has, on the other hand, brought about a rare and sensitive illumination of some of Keats's most profound thoughts and utterances, for which we can scarcely be sufficiently grateful. Not all the book, of course, is equally good: the section on 'Beauty is Truth . . .' is a little tenuous and unsatifying; the new chapter on 'Keats and Blake' rests largely on the assumption of Blake's—which C. S. Lewis and the late Charles Williams have done their best to demolish—that Milton 'without knowing it, was of the Devil's party.' Amid many perceptive things in it there are some overstatements, and it seems less closely knit than the others; and 'Keats and Wordsworth' pays too little attention to the essential differences between these two poets; it mentions, but scarcely elaborate, such a forthright separation of himself from the Wordsworthian type of poet as Keats records in his letter to Woodhouse of 27th October, 1818. But the masterly analysis of the Chapman's *Homer* sonnet, and of the meaning of *Endymion;* his handling of such abstractions as "The Feel of *not* to Feel it", and Keats's use of "Speculation", and his most effective answer to Dr. Tillyard in 'Keats's Milton', are all memorable. The two most important chapters, however, are probably the two opening ones on Fanny Brawne and Fanny Keats.

I shall not readily forget the intense imaginative excitement aroused in my mind when, in about 1932, I first encountered Mr.

Murry's *Keats and Shakespeare*. I know of no comparable contemporary work that stirred me so deeply except perhaps the altogether different fusion of scholarship and vitality in C. S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love*. As a key to Keats's work Mr. Murry's book was to me what *The Lyrical Ballads* had been to De Quincey: "a revelation of untrodden worlds"; and, while now questioning some of its conclusions, I still think it one of the wisest and most sensitive pieces of critical evocation ever written in our time. But in one point it was sadly misleading: on the character of Fanny Brawne. It was not Mr. Murry's fault—the new evidence of Fanny's devotion and understanding of Keats (still not of his poetry, I think.—but then he didn't ask that) was in her letters to Fanny Keats; and these were given to the world by Mr. Fred Edgcumbe only in 1936. But Mr. Murry's book was influential and persuasive, and set the seal on Fanny's reputation for inadequacy and failing Keats in his hour of greatest need. The evidence—and it was powerful—was three tormented letters Keats wrote her in 1820. It is easy now, as Mr. Murry says, to see he ought to have made greater allowances for "the strange psychological disturbances which advance phthisis can produce in persons of 'more than ordinary organic sensibility'. above all, when they are passionately in love;" but there seemed little warrant for doing so at the time. He confesses he neglected to give full significance to Keats's plea to Browne: "For my sake be her advocate for ever"; and lacked the courage to submit the last year of Keats's life to the same careful scrutiny given to the earlier years. "It was, in those days," he writes "too painful to be borne"; and surely this is a case for human charity and critical absolution from all to whom the memory of Katherine Mansfield's life and work have an enduring validity. I make this point because of Lord Gorrell's attack on Murry for injustice to Fanny Brawne. Mr. Murry's essay here is a vindication of his position when he wrote *Keats and Shakespeare*, and the fullest recantation of it in the light of the new knowledge since available. An admirable critical humility could scarcely go further in what is almost a self-laceration; and this essay alone would make the book worth having. That on Fanny Keats, the gentle, devoted and much-loved sister of the poet, is necessarily pitched in a lower key; but her memory, too, is evoked with a quiet tenderness we have not elsewhere encountered.

Only one other point needs perhaps to mentioned about *The Mystery of Keats*, and that is a stylistic one: the pregnant sensi-

bility and aphoristic cogency of much of Mr. Murry's language. Sometimes it is the single phrase that only its context makes luminous, such as the reference to Keats's "authentic vitality", to "the clarity that supervened" in his letter to Rice of 14th February, 1820, or the description of *The Ode to Grecian Urn* as "something between a painting and a dramatic poem. It is sculptured drama." He can make important distinctions such as that Keats's "absorption of Milton's art was undisturbed by any affinity of feeling"; or emphasize at once the destructive force and the revitalizing power, "the creative incandescence in the soul," of Keats's love for Fanny Brawne. More often, however, it is the complete articulation of a thought that is important, as in his discussion of imagery in poetry:

> "Imagery must not assume a *raison d'être* of its own; it must exist, not for its own sake, but as subordinated to the predominant emotion, which it has at once to obey, to express, and to communicate."

Or he will unerringly distinguish one of the factors that go to separate poetry of the first from that of the second order:

> "And we may hazard the guess that it is this long period of unconscious preparation which distinguishes the great poem from the merely good one; that this is the reason why, in a great poem, the subject seems to be dissolved away in the incandescence of the emotion it kindles; and finally, that this is the reason that the depths of significance in a great poem are inexhaustible."

Or he will make his final comment on the self-abnegation in suffering of the great poet to whom yet the miseries of the world are misery:

> "The great poet vexes the world and himself: but in the selfless quality of his vexation is the balm."

A wise and illuminating book.

What, then, of this poet whom Dorothy Hewlett has so devotedly, and copiously, evoked, and who is for Murry, as for Arnold, the one English poet *of the same order of poetry* (stature is not in question) as Shakespeare? Of the exact place of Keats in

the poetic hierarchy there will always be differences of opinion; and the assessment will always be partly determined by the temperament of the critic; but of the absolute value of a considerable part of his poetry—some of the Sonnets, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Hyperion*, and above all the Odes—there can be no serious dispute. But for reasons not altogether connected with poetry the work of certain poets is of more significance to a given age than is that of others: the relevance of Donne to the '20s and '30s is an obvious example. What, then, of Keats?

Easy generalizations, such as that we are now enjoying another 'Romantic Revival' in poetry, do not take us very far. Nor does the fact that certain characteristics of Romanticism were highly developed in Keats—as, for example, the so-called 'Romantic death-wish', in such passages as:

> *Darkling I listen; and, for many a time*
> *I have been half in love with easeful Death,*
> *Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,*
> *To take into the air my quiet breath;*
> *Now more than ever seems it rich to die . . .*

or

> *Verse, Fame and Beauty are intense indeed;*
> *But Death intenser—Death is life's high meed.*

In our harsher, less 'heroic' age, we have a notable distrust of personified abstractions with capital letters. No; the particular relevance of Keats to our time seems to me two-fold: first his deep compassion for the pain and suffering incident to mortality, and the necessity for the poet to identify himself with it:

> *Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life*
> *Where I may find the agonies, the strife*
> *Of human hearts,*

re-echoing in his maturity as:

> *"None can usurp this height," returned the shade,*
> *But those to whom the miseries of the world*
> *Are misery, and will not let them rest.*

And secondly—despite one of the above examples—his use of concrete, sensuous imagery to clothe an imaginative concern with the individual *thing*, not with the abstract generality. Keats would certainly have felt all charms fly at the mere touch of cold

Marxist philosophy permeating so much of the '30s poetry; and would have resented its "palpable design on us." But the direct and sensuous awareness of experience shown by Dylan Thomas and the neo-Romantics that stem from him, make them the heirs of Keats's mode of apprehension, though the idiom of expression is inevitably very different. And is different largely because of the profound influence of another poet on many of the contemporary group: Blake. Blake has, to a large extent, replaced Donne as a contemporary influence; and the effect as seen, for example, in much of Thomas's work is a mystical rather than an intellectual apprehending of the experiences of the senses, and a sensuous apprehension of a mystique. The result is that organic quality that marks much of his best work from "The force that through the green fuse" to "A Refusal to mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London." But Blake in turn had a profound, if not always very tangible influence on Keats, as Mr. Murry points out; and it is not necessary to accept all the assumptions of that chapter to realise the affinity; or that that affinity is at the chief point of contact between Blake and the moderns: The Prophetic Books.

HERMANN PESCHMANN

ANTHOLOGIZING

A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse, chosen by JOHN SNELLING, with a foreword by SIR HERBERT STANLEY, (Blackwell, 10s. 6d.).
The Poet's Progress, chosen by J. HUBERT JAGGER, (Blackie 8s. 6d.).
This Half Century, 50 Poems for 1900-1950, chosen by N. L. CLAY, (Heinemann, 5s.).
Henri Christophe, by DEREK WALCOTT (Advocate Co., Barbadoes).

WHY do we hear so seldom from African poets north of the Cape? Mr. Snelling's collection proves that Rhodesia can claim many who are as rich and fertile in their writing as the country they spring from, and it is refreshing to pick up a volume of lesser-known poets in which one is not continually obliged to read stanzas exhibiting the influences and pastiches of past and

present idols. Many of these poets sing with a clean, if not a new, tongue, and from observation of their surroundings instead of from perusal of the anthologies of all-comers. Quotation, I feel, is almost invidious in this case, as the poems all show a welcome and even simplicity, lacking entirely complication and obscurity of structure and feeling. By that I am not suggesting that there is any aggressive regression to archaic forms, with many a 'Hey-nonny-no' and second persons singular—far from it, with one delightful exception that really does come off—but if the reader is not for any reason prejudiced against recognisable construction and spontaneous expression, he will award this volume—excellently printed and produced, incidentally—an honoured place on his shelves.

Mr. Jagger has compiled a well-balanced and unbiased anthology of English lyrical verse. He includes the ever-favourite poems—the inevitable anthologisms—but gives favourite poets their deserved prominence. Which is more than can be said for Mr. Clay.

Mr. Clay's collection is marked by obvious inclusions and, in view of his avowed intention to 'help readers to survey the growth of poetry . . . since 1900', some inexplicable omissions. Being clearly anxious to include the Right People by the standards of one contemporary school of thought, Mr. Clay goes so far as to list in his foreword seven poets who 'matter most' and who are therefore honoured by being represented by two poems each. They will probably accept his kindness in much the same spirit as the others will receive his neglect.

Returning to the work of further-flung poets, the West Indian writer Derek Walcott, whose poems have previously been reviewed in Poetry Quarterly, is now responsible for an historical dramatic chronicle in seven scenes. It is a little difficult these days not to take Shakespeare or Fry as one's criterion when judging the work of other poet-playwrights, but Mr. Walcott's stagecraft is by any comparison somewhat heavy-handed— a fault time and practice may well remove—and the production of *Henri Christophe* could hardly be anything but a rather dull affair, being concerned uneventfully with the comings and goings of kings. Their going are only incidents where much action is suggested.

But from the writing standpoint Mr. Walcott's work shows some real ability. Christophe's final address, to a necromancer's skull, contains lines that give some indication of his standard:

Skull, when your smile wore flesh around its teeth.
Time like a pulse was knocking in the eyelid,
The worm was mining in the bone for metal.

Mr. Walcott is more indebted to outside influences than the Rhodesian poets already mentioned, but his new work, if rather more self-conscious and contrived than could be desired, deserves notice and encouragement.

JON WYNNE-TYSON

A NOTE ON 'ON SPOKEN AND WRITTEN POETRY'

I FEEL compelled to make a few remarks prompted by Mr. D. G. Bridson's essay in last winter's number of the *Poetry Quarterly*, a copy of which has only lately come into my hands.

I agree with Mr. Bridson entirely in that true poetry is word music, and for this reason consider 'poetry' a word much overworked. Nonsense, for Pater to say that prose is more difficult to write, although in this case one cannot properly draw a distinction between the two. And in one sense only do I agree with him that music is the purest sort of art, being most nearly divorced from content. Considerable restraint and subtlety are in my opinion necessary ingredients of any great work of art, and I have come, for these reasons, to the conclusion that word rather than ordinary music is the foremost of the fine arts, disagreeing, therefore, with Mr. Bridson's contention that the former should normally be rendered the latter in being spoken out loud. The whole humble charm of true poetry's subtlety lies in the fact that it does not, in a sense, in fact exist, being both imperceptible and—here, of course, I do again support Mr. Bridson—completely self-effacing in so far as the content which is none the less an integral part of it, is concerned. But because I emphasise subtlety and under-emphasis I personally, if paradoxically, incline to intellectual poetry. Thought and feeling are inseparable; certainly not antithetic and—I write from my own experience—just as much satisfaction may be derived from poetry in a language, even, which one does not understand, as in one's own, although in the former instance the poet's inspiration is, I believe, an even more essential pre-requisite of such enjoyment. To revert again

to comprehended poetry; beauty makes her home on many planes and if the poet cannot hold his breath for too long (not that he could) in the stratosphere, much aesthetic delight remains to be gleaned from some neat idea or phrase. Over-obscurity one probes, I fancy, at risk of tumbling into a vacuum, and do not think that the average poetry reader requires to puzzle over a single more normal line for quite so long as Mr. Bridson makes out.

In speaking poetry, further, one not only reduces—or fails to reduce it—to the level of perceptibility, but also runs the risk of the parts' proving anything but self-effacing and vying quite successfully with the whole: very bad form and a contingency which, in his plea for simplicity, Mr. Bridson properly insists should be avoided. I maintain that the poetry readers of the B.B.C. follow the general trend of making all things always seem the same; that, coupled with their ingenuity, their melodious voices can render the most shocking stuff passable while, for precisely similar reasons, distracting one's attention from the greater pulchritude of ouststanding work. It is impossible to be fully aware of more than one thing at a time.

Regarding Mr. Bridson's argument that the mental music heard by his reader is often very different from that heard by the poet; I think rhythm to be the one constituent of true poetry, besides beauty, which is reasonably obtrusive. More: it is only a small initiate that have to do with poetry anyway—which fact should dispel Mr. Bridson's final fear that poetry will die unless again normally perceived by the outer ear. When this minority are levelled up or down, depending on one's point of view, to the common mean of mediocrity touched on previously, there will ipso facto be no demand for poetry. And, the poet being indisseverable from his environment and perhaps mercifully, probably no supply.

E. I. LOUCH

INSTEAD OF A POET

It is with real trepidation that I begin to write this article on the work of one who, in the opinion of many whose names, if not exactly household ones, are at least held in great respect by the audience for which this quarterly caters, is one of the few excellent writers of English prose today. He is an author whose only published books are two not very big volumes of not very good poetry. I refer to Mr. Paul Potts, the Canadian poet, on whose identity card Mr. George Barker has inscribed the words, "that criminal whose felony is to love everything a bit too much, that lost revolutionary with the sentiments of an Irish tenor . . . When they come to name the hierarchy of humanitarian martyrs this colonial with the childish name like Abou Ben Adhem, will be there." They come from reviews of Mr. Potts's second book of Mr. Barker's poems, *Instead of a Sonnet.*

These poems were written and printed as broadsheets, and sold by the author in the streets of London before and during the war. On a first reading one would suppose that they were the political verses of a communist agitator. Take, for example, the title poem:—

I have no song of praise, no words of love
For cats or dogs or daffodils
But I have tried to leave forever in your ears
The noise that men make when they break their chains.

or this:—

THE MUSE TO AN UNKNOWN POET

I wonder poet, can you take it
Alone out there among the hireling men.
The dawn, if ever there is to be a dawn
Will come long after you are gone.
There is no love, no laughter, no parades
And mighty little ham and eggs,
Alone out there among the hireling men.

This kind of thing is technically the worst verse ever written by a poet, but much preferable to the polished masturbations of some versifiers. A second reading shows that, though they may have been written by an agitator, they couldn't possibly

have been written by a communist as the editor of the *Daily Worker* understands the word; and that they are as political, and as much a pain in the neck to the politically-minded, as the Sermon on the Mount. This, for instance, is no way for a party member to write:

I sat around listening to men
Talking revolution
All about free love and no private property.
So I went out and lived the way they talked
Now when I got done for ninety days
Did they send in a cigarette
Did they write me all the news
On long white sheets of paper?

As a poet, Mr. Potts is perhaps not to be considered as a contributor to English literature. It is, fortunately, some years since he last wrote any verses. What, then, gives him sufficient status for the editor of *Poetry Quarterly* to require a leading article on the work of this Canadian? His prose writings, over a number of years, have been scattered and sporadic, and published with few exceptions in periodicals with small circulations. Some of it has been broadcast: but rarely, and then on the Third Programme. His autobiography, *A Canadian Heresy*, largely compiled from his published articles is still in MS. The book he went to Israel to write (*The Long Sabbath*) was refused by the publisher. Until one of these volumes finds a publisher with the courage to bring it out, the admirers of Mr. Potts' prose will simply have to hunt for it in the back numbers of the little reviews.

Mr. Potts may be a Canadian, but it is as evident as the typewriter under my fist that he was born in the shadow of the Blarney stone. In his prose you find the Irish mastery of peroration: he is a brother to Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante O'Connor of Miss Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, but, instead of being obsessed with sex, Mr. Potts' obsession is love. "My authority is love, my witnesses are the poor." And he stated an important truth and defined his attitude to socialism when he wrote:— "Socialism, whatever else it is, is definitely not capitalism for everybody."

It is difficult to speak of Mr. Paul Potts without comparing him with his friend, the late George Orwell, who spent his life illustrating the material stupidities of socialists. For Mr. Paul Potts

resembles and differs from Orwell in this: that it is not the material, but the spiritual stupidities of socialists that he illuminates. The dynamo driving socialism, he believes, is not the man-made, cunningly balanced mechanical contrivance of the Marxian thesis, but love. Perhaps I can make my meaning clearer by quoting one of Mr. Potts' aphorisms: "To invite a man to dinner who is hungry yet too poor to pay for his own, is not sentimental, it merely isn't quite enough." What is wrong with socialism in practice is not that its economics don't work out, but the frightening absence of love among its practitioners.

> "Equally a poor person can behave as arrogantly as any banker; a socialist can be just as much a fascist as a member of the Gestapo. The difference is one of degree and opportunity rather than kind. The further wounds inflicted on the already wounded by other wounded people, disabled by the same enemy, usually hurt harder, give more pain, than the original wound. A cripple chides a blind man in his darkness . . . It almost seems as if over the head of Christ hung up, one thief cheats the silence of the other. One aspect of oppression long neglected, is the harm that it does to the oppressor."

And again:

> "As it was the priests and not the people who killed Christ, it was the commissars, not the workers, who killed liberty."

This stuff is even less acceptable to socialists than George Orwell's criticisms once were. Mr. Paul Potts is what Orwell never pretended to be: an artist, not merely a writer. Orwell in 1940 measured news-items in the daily papers with a ruler, in order to have his facts right if he ever wrote about those times. About the same period Mr. Potts, because he was an artist whose muse was humanity, while in the army, when one afternoon they had sent a boy to the guardroom for wanting to be a conscientious objector, put in for compassionate leave because Democracy had been wounded. This is a poetic gesture that Orwell understood, just as it was one which it would never have ocurred to him to make.

In 1943 when the United Nations were liberating Italy, Mr. Ezra Pound, who had allied himself to the fascist cause and had

been broadcasting on the Italian radio, was captured by the G.I's. At that time, it is necessary to remind everyone, the name of Ezra Pound stank in the nostrils of the intelligentsia even more highly than that of P. G. Wodehouse. It was then that Mr. Potts, the life-long enemy of the gas-vans and rubber truncheons, rushed to the defence of a poet who had spoken on their side. Mr. T. S. Eliot wrote to congratulate the editor of this quarterly for his courage in publishing that article. And when Mr. Roy Campbell, who fought on the fascist side in the Spanish Civil War, later got himself into trouble through publishing his Mac-Spaunday satire in *Talking Bronco,* it was Mr. Potts who was the first to speak in his favour. Today, it is fashionable in the literary papers to speak well of these two poets (it is, after all, only their due) but it should be remembered who when their names were either execrated or unmentioned in the highbrow periodicals, was their champion.

These are, of course, meritorious deeds and Mr. Potts has every right to wear over his left breast the ribbons for them; but these articles showed not merely evidence of his courage, but also of the first-class quality of his writing. I give one example, taken from his defence of Pound:—

> 'Yet, and this is as impossible to explain, as it is impossible to ignore, that there is something in human poetry beyond all laws, all rules, and all conventions. Put it this way —a catholic believes that a priest has the power to change bread during mass, into the body of Christ. Don't bother here whether you believe it or not. The point is, he believes any priest can do it, whether that priest be Saint John of the Cross or a little fascist bureaucrat suck holing to a 'Franco captain.' If a policeman can enjoy Villon without bothering about his being a thief, a socialist should also enjoy Pound without letting his anti-semitism spoil the cantos . . . Men who have never read his verse are thirsting for his blood, but if the U.S. military authorities do execute him, all one's instincts will rush uselessly to his defence, and men will feel a deep sense of futility as if a bren-gun had been used to kill a leaf."

Yet as a literary critic pure and simple, Mr. Potts' contribution has not been negligible. When he wrote a long article about the poetry of Mr. George Barker, Mr. Barker's poetry was scarcely discussed. But as an essay on the nature of a poet it was of the first importance, and a greater compliment to Mr. Barker than

the recent *New Statesman* review which waved the poet to an empty chair between Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. W. H. Auden.

Those who have read the works of Mr. Paul Potts must have been struck by the quality, which is proper to poetry, of *memorableness* in his prose. Only a poet could write prose of the kind that Mr. Potts writes. The reason is not that he has an ear for words, rhythm or fine phrase (though he has all of these) but that he writes in images. Here is an example: "To be pompous is to put a glove over one's mediocrity." Or take this description of a girl in a lunatic asylum: "What was left was the movement of her hands, the shape of her forehead and that voice that was to melody what a stream is to a mountain." I have taken this sentence as an example, not only of the excellence, but of the pitfalls of the style in which he has chosen to write: the danger of sentimentality. If, for instance, he had used the word "water" instead of "a stream" that sentence would be less uncomfortably near the twee. Yet, again and again in Mr. Potts' writing, one comes up against sentences which can only be described as superb. Such as this one, which is about the part played by Lord Strathcona—then plain Smith—in drawing up the treaty of Winnipeg during the Red River Rebellion: "Smith's idea of a treaty was that before killing a man you first sold him his coffin."

It may seem surprising that a man who can write such prose is unable to publish a book of it. But I imagine that the reason publishers are afraid of his work is that it is unclassifiable. It is not easy to find a convenient pigeon hole for a writer, who is neither a plain socialist nor a plain artist, but a man whose art is the rare and difficult one of love. George Orwell, after all, could be classed as a rebel socialist, and, as he dealt with facts, was interesting to read even if you didn't agree with him. But Mr. Paul Potts is a socialist obsessed with love, not the kind of love that finds a half-crown or a worker's flat for a beggar in the gutter, but the rather horrible embarrassing kind of love that induced Sir Gawaine to go to bed with the stinking, hideous old woman. Mr. Paul Potts is an artist before he is a socialist, and his muse is that love which H. G. Wells once compared, in a remarkable sentence, to a starving Siberian tiger.

DAVID WRIGHT

ASPECTS OF AESTHETICISM

THERE are words that possess an unfortunate past, and which we have come to associate with the specious, the spurious, or the suspect. Through this corruption of original meaning, and our consequent avoidance of the term, we are apt to go in want of a word which expresses some quite valid idea. Such is the word 'conservatism', with its echo of capitalist exploitation; and such the word 'liberalism', redolent still of an evil *laissez-faire*. That both these terms initially stood for certain unchanging attitudes of mind—a vigilant respect for tradition in life, and a tolerant humanism of outlook—has not been able to guarantee their usage. They are looked on, sometimes, as bad verbal tender.

Such is the case with 'aestheticism'. We are apt to think of its outward credentials: the bearing of a lily, an acquired taste for hashish, and a quite unsmiling profession of sin. One of the reasons for picturing it thus is the negligence or failure of the movement on the whole to clearly define its own intentions. Wilde, of course, achieved this many times; but a statement couched as a paradox may easily seem to miss the mark. It is rather like taking a rocket to Bisley. But in spite of this, underneath its cosmetic—the fantastic war-paint it sported in the 'nineties—aestheticism may be said to contain the true perennial philosophy of art. To distinguish the 'period' aberration from its constant central essence is a matter no critic has yet undertaken, and one I should like to indicate here.

This task is facilitated no little by the appearance of a new anthology*—a selection from the writings of the aesthetes compiled by Richard Aldington. In his introduction to this collection, Mr. Aldington writes with sprightliness and grace, but when it comes to defining his subject, he politely and adamantly declines. 'The whole point is,' he tells us, 'that art is to be enjoyed, not dissected'; and there, with the indirect suggestion that the function of art is the production of pleasure, we are forced to leave him and look elsewhere.

Pater, in an essay afterwards excluded from publication in his collected works came nearer to defining it than anybody else. 'The aesthetic poetry,' he wrote, in an article devoted to the verse

* "The Religion of Beauty" (Heinemann 12/6)

of William Morris, is neither a mere reproduction of Greek or mediaeval poetry, nor only an idealization of modern life and sentiment. The atmosphere on which its effect depends belongs to no simple form of poetry, no actual form of life. Greek poetry, mediaeval or modern poetry, projects, above the realities of its time, a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that transfigured world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or 'earthly paradise'. It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal. Like some strange second flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but it must not be confounded with it. The secret of the enjoyment of it is that inversion of home-sickness known to some, that incurable thirst for the sense of escape, which no actual form of life satisfies, no poetry even, if it be merely simple and spontaneous.

In his insistence on the self-contained nature, the splendid isolation and freedom from fear of the anachronistic in art, Pater was making an important contribution. Two other points in his statement, however, predict or reflect the spirit of his times rather than reaching to the essence beyond them. First, the sublimation, of which he talks, might more rightly be described as an etiolation—a sort of literary volatilization of what was already literature, not life. It is this parasitically creative in-breeding—this 'strange second flowering after date'—that gives so much of the verse of that day an imitative after-ring and spirit. Thus there was a 'nineties *rechauffé* of Gautier, Baudelaire, and Verlaine in English, as well as sedulous re-servings of Swinburne, Fitz-Gerald's Omar, and Keats. Secondly, the reference to an escapist purpose (just, in so far as all convincing work relieves us from reality's personal pressure) is limited by hints of the exotic and eclectic. Art need not take us for its alternative on any conducted tropical tour. The technicolour landscapes are not essential. There was something of the Cecil B. de Mille about Pater.

Another writer of the period, Frederick W. H. Myers, in an essay on *Rossetti and the Religion of Beauty*,* equates aestheticism with hedonism—a higher hedonism of the imagination. Apart, though, from remarking on the presence of the sensuous

* Published 1883

and erotic, the essay fails to delineate any over-all qualities of 'aesthetic' art.

Nor, when we come to the verse itself, do we find the poets any clearer about it. There was no Boileau or Verlaine in their ranks to posit the position with an *Art Poetique*. In some, we detect a tendency to interpret aestheticism in quietest terms, as when the little-known Rosamund Marriot Watson translated a poem from the French of Joseph Boulmier:

Men are unlovely, but their works are fair—
Ay, men are evil, but their books are good:
The clay hath perished, and the soul laid bare
Shines from their books in heavenly solitude.
Light on each slender stem pure blossoms rest.
Like angel envoys of the Heavenly powers;
Of all earth's maidens these are first and best,
And all I love is here—old books, fresh flowers.

Other better poets—Lionel Johnson, for example—experienced and expressed the tug-of-war between quietism and the lure of pure sensation. One of the best poems produced by this inner dialectic is the piece, *Plato in London*—a study in contrasts, one might say, to employ the speech of the period:

The pure flame of one taper fall
Over the old and comely page:
No harsher light disturb at all
This converse with a treasured sage.
Seemly, and fair, and of the best,
If Plato be our guest,
Should things befall.

'The hours pass; and the fire burns low'; and the poet turns from meditation to the nocturnal hubbub of the city:

Lean from the window to the air:
Hear London's voice upon the night!
Thou hast held converse with things are:
Look now upon another sight!
The calm stars, in their living skies:
And then, these surging cries,
This restless glare!

The resolution of these two attractions was easier of course, in verse than in art. Indeed, the whole background to what Yeats

called 'the tragic generation' of the 'nineties is here, with its opposing ideals of contemplation and experience, its fatal and hostile magnetic-fields of interest; and not a few suicides and slower self-murders marked out the course of Dowson's *Poets' Road* (a one-way thoroughfare travelled by those who had given up the search for equilibrium):

Wine and woman and song,
Three things garnish our way:
Yet is day over long.

It was Arthur Symons, who did the most to create an equivalent in verse for the impressionism of Sickert and his colleagues. This impressionism was largely urban: a transcription of the chiaroscuro of the town; its foot-lit music-halls and lamp-flecked streets, its alley-ways, interiors, dance-halls, and casinos. 'Probably,'* wrote Symons—in defence of the metropolitan *motif* in verse—'probably I enjoy the hayfield as much as you do; but I enjoy quite other scents and sensations as well, and I take the former for granted, and write my poem, for a change, about the latter. There is no necessary difference in artistic value between a good poem about a flower in the hedge and a good poem about the scent in a sachet. I am always charmed to read beautiful poems about nature in the country. Only, personally, I prefer town to country; and in the town we have to find for ourselves, as best we may, the *décor* which is the town equivalent of the great natural *dècor* of fields and hills. Here it is that artificiality comes in; and if anyone sees no beauty in the effects of artificial light, in all the variable, most human, and yet most factitious town, I can only pity him, and go on my way.'

Yet out of these brave intimations, Symons evolved no large-scale art. It was always the momentary and evanescent, rather than the lasting, which intrigued him. 'The moods of men!'** he remarked on one occasion, 'There I find my subject, there the region over which art rules; and whatever has once been a mood of mine, though it has been no more than a ripple on the sea, and had no longer than the ripple's duration, I claim the right to render, if I can, in verse.'

* Preface to the second edition of his volume of poems "Silhouettes" 1896

** Preface to the second edition of his volume of poems "London Nights" 1896

At the beginning of this essay, I spoke of the perennial poetic abiding in aestheticism, but hidden or disguised by its 'period' dress. This valid core is, briefly, the belief that the end of art is the creation of beauty; beauty, not pleasure, goodness or truth. This is not, of course, to maintain that beauty, truth and goodness are in any way unrelated;* or that the beauty of a work of art does not invariably bring us pleasure. But beauty is the proper object of art, as truth is that of philosophy, and goodness that of moral science; and by virtue of being oriented towards it, art becomes what it truly is, and none other. In proposing such an aim for poetry the aesthetes of the 'eighties and 'nineties had their feet planted on the right track. Where they slipped up was in their conception of beauty as manifest in a poem. Their two main errors we may, in short, describe as the subject fallacy and the fallacy of thinking in parts instead of wholes. The first of these—responsible for interminable catalogues of jewels, dyes, and peacocks—was based on the assumption that a beautiful subject inevitably resulted in a beautiful poem. And in such context, by beautiful, one was meant to understand the 'comely' and the 'fair'. The second fallacy was partly the effect of taking too literally, and in isolation, the wise admonition of Keats to 'load every rift with ore'. To many of these writers a poem was rather—to borrow the words from Edward Dowden:

a calm retreat
Of tempered light where fair things fair things meet.

—a window in the Wardour Street taste of the day.

It was this concentration on component parts, each in itself a poetical relic, this inattention to a final impression to a final unity, that upset these poets. For what the aesthetes failed to understand was that a poem is something more—and perhaps something other—than the sum of its parts. It is not the addition but the fusion of the constituents which counts. Beauty, in art, in other words is the impression which we receive not from a mixture but a compound. The aesthetes sometimes forgot to bake their cake.

DEREK STANFORD

* Quite what this relationship is, I have attempted to indicate on pages 19-20 of my book "The Freedom of Poetry" (Falcon Press)